

**From:** [Victor Shen](#)  
**To:** [Jackie Wilde](#)  
**Subject:** Fw: The Head of Passage Canal Development Project, Phase 1  
**Date:** Tuesday, December 14, 2021 7:45:18 PM

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**From:** PWS Stewardship Foundation <info@princewilliamsound.org>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 14, 2021 8:35 AM  
**To:** Victor Shen <councilseata@whittieralaska.gov>; Tom Wagner <councilseatb@whittieralaska.gov>; Dave Dickason <mayor@whittieralaska.gov>; Cathy McCord <councilseatd@whittieralaska.gov>; David Pinquoch <councilseate@whittieralaska.gov>; Peter Denmark <councilseatf@whittieralaska.gov>; Dan Blair <councilseatg@whittieralaska.gov>  
**Subject:** The Head of Passage Canal Development Project, Phase 1

Dear Whittier City Council,

As members of the Board of Directors of the Prince William Sound Stewardship Foundation, we are writing to express our concerns regarding the proposed Head of Passage Canal Development Project. The Prince William Sound Stewardship Foundation is a 501c3 non-profit organization committed to keeping Prince William Sound healthy, clean, and wild, for all to enjoy. We remove marine debris from hundreds of miles of shoreline, treat invasive species, work to protect local food security, and deliver high-quality education programs like our annual Prince William Sound Natural History Symposium. Our all-volunteer Board consists of local business owners, guides, captains, educators, and others with deep-rooted ties to Prince William Sound, and our work supports both commercial and independent uses in Prince William Sound. We also have strong ties to the Whittier community and support the city's long-term needs.

The Huna-Totem development plan will have a profound impact on the Whittier community and the wilderness character of Prince William Sound. To communicate our concerns and to share the Prince William Sound Stewardship Foundation's vision, we have collaborated and highlighted our main concerns. We hope to be a part of the conversation that will lead to a well-considered development plan. We oppose moving forward before more broad stakeholder engagement is facilitated to address the issues below.

Every phase of this proposed development should truly serve the City's residents, contribute to a positive evolution of the Whittier township, and ensure responsible usage of Alaska's irreplaceable natural resources. Resultant overuse and overcrowding in Western Prince William Sound and the Congressionally designated Nellie Juan-

College Fiord Wilderness Study Area should be considered, especially as this overuse and overcrowding would likely expand outward, affecting other communities and even the most remote areas of Prince William Sound. Air and water quality issues are significant concerns. Also, noise pollution is an existing problem that could be significantly exacerbated with potential increases in commercial and other uses associated with a sharp rise in cruise ship activity, especially in the fiords.

The specific issues of concern for the Prince William Sound Stewardship Foundation are:

1. **Air Quality:** We experience noticeable cruise ship exhaust emissions with only one ship moored in Passage Canal, especially during periods of temperature inversion. Passage Canal and the Head of Bay create deep canyons where summertime weather patterns can lead to conditions that trap emissions. The same has been observed in the WSA in places such as College Fiord. Before even Phase I of the proposal is approved, broad stakeholder engagement can come up with *commitments* and *mitigations* to protect human health in Whittier and scenic values in Western Prince William Sound. Ideas include state-of-the-art air quality monitoring like that which is in place in Glacier Bay National Park, Juneau, and the Tongass National Forest or requisite shore-based power for moored vessels, as in Juneau and other cities. These measures can be done in a way that protects both cruise activities and human health and fosters enjoyment of the shared Prince William Sound space.
2. **Water Quality:** There are statewide ongoing concerns regarding the discharge of sewage/gray water by cruise ships. Given the ever increasing fragility of the Prince William Sound ecosystem, we are asking for a specific re-commitment to prohibit any refuse/ sewage/ gray water in Prince William Sound.
3. **Shore Impact:** The proposed development plan raises concerns about impacts to the beaches and near shore use, particularly a loss of recreational opportunities at the Head of the Bay, which is often used by local families for picnics, bonfires, and other gatherings. This is the most accessible beach in Western Prince William Sound, in fact the only community access to water's edge other than the much smaller area of Lu Young Park at First Salmon Run. In addition to Head of the Bay impacts, we are concerned about a potential

increase in degradation of popular trails and recreation sites in Passage Canal, Blackstone Bay, Culross Passage, Port Wells, and beyond. Already, our volunteers are busy repairing damage in places such as Perry Island and Blackstone Bay, where overuse has led to litter, erosion, unauthorized development, and more. We believe the heart of Prince William Sound is its wild character and that the agencies tasked with maintaining that resource are already stretched thin. The size and scope of this proposal is certain to bring more crowding and resource damage to popular areas and drive use further into the Sound. Broad stakeholder engagement before Phase I is approved will allow a chance to make sure these public resources enjoyed by so many today still serve public needs.

4. **Noise Pollution:** Most of the marine operators in Whittier--sightseeing, sport fishing, kayaking, water taxi and personal watercraft operators--were running at or near capacity last year. To meet demand created by more cruise ships, the number of tour/service operators will have to increase substantially. This is not a matter of commercial competition, but truly a stand for the wilderness values of the existing users experience in Prince William Sound. The introduction of high-impact business concepts could lead to a significant uncontrolled increase of human activity in Prince William Sound. A model to consider is the Wilderness Best Management Practices Agreement in Tracy Arm in the Tongass National Forest, which allows for thriving cruise ship activity while also addressing noise issues such as outdoor public address systems and other noise sources.
5. **Increased Depletion of Sport Fishing Stocks:** Halibut and some salmon populations are declining. More fishing charter operations on the western Sound could result in ever more stock depletion--and increasingly restrictive catch quota systems. We support the charter fishing and commercial fishing industries and want to see these important economic drivers continue to succeed and connect people with Alaska's incredible fisheries resources. But, we also acknowledge that Prince William Sound fisheries are a finite resource that could be affected by this proposal. In addition to declining fish stocks, Whittier is the nearest waterfront to the large population of Anchorage residents, and yet a decreasing amount of local seafood is transported from Prince William Sound to Anchorage. It is important to prioritize sustainable development of our local food systems and address Alaska's issues of food insecurity. Having a working waterfront means that all user groups must have equitable access to necessary waterfront infrastructure, so as to support Alaska in all sectors, not just the cruise ship industry.

6.

**Inherent Educational Responsibility:** All user groups of Prince William Sound must be educated on boater safety, hypothermia and exposure risks, ecosystem preservation, environmental awareness, and Leave No Trace ethics. Customized educational campaigns must be offered on a variety of platforms and to all user groups as a strategy to mitigate the negative effects of human activity in the Prince William Sound and the ongoing impact assessment of the Wilderness Study Area. There are already concerns regarding the availability of state and/or federal funds from Chugach National Forest, Alaska State Parks, and other land managers for the current demands of education, let alone the increased needs of further education or, if necessary, enforcement. Likewise, regional and village Native corporations may not have the capacity to manage the increased uses that could spill onto their lands. Before Phase I of this proposal is approved, there needs to be broad stakeholder engagement to ensure mitigations are in place to prevent growing impacts to the lands and waters we all cherish.

7.

**Quality of Life and Quality of Visitor Experience in Whittier:**

Congestion, both in town and in Passage Canal, is an important point to consider, along with the capacity of the Anton Anderson Memorial Tunnel to handle the influx of visitation to Whittier. Broad stakeholder engagement should occur to make sure the interests of residents, small boaters, sightseeing/water taxi companies, jet skis, and others are addressed before even Phase I is approved.

The approval process for this project is moving too fast. From introduction to the public to presentation for City Council approval will have been a scant 5 weeks. Too little time for public input has been allowed. We request more opportunity for public discussion from a broad range of community stakeholders before this project moves forward.

The Prince William Sound Stewardship Foundation is asking for commitments from the Huna-Totem project developers, the involved cruise lines, and the City of Whittier to acknowledge these concerns, requests, and recommendations prior to proceeding with the Head of Passage Canal development project.

Thank you for your consideration,

The Prince William Sound Stewardship Foundation Board of Directors



Prince William Sound Stewardship Foundation

[www.princewilliamsound.org](http://www.princewilliamsound.org)

[info@princewilliamsound.org](mailto:info@princewilliamsound.org)

*Keeping Prince William Sound healthy, clean, and wild, for all to enjoy.*

**From:** [Victor Shen](#)  
**To:** [Jackie Wilde](#)  
**Subject:** Fw: Comments from Discovery Voyages on Huna Totem's proposed development at head of the bay  
**Date:** Tuesday, December 14, 2021 7:46:41 PM

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**From:** Dean Rand <dean.rand@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 6, 2021 9:16 AM  
**To:** Victor Shen <councilseata@whittieralaska.gov>; councilkseatb@whittieralaska.gov <councilkseatb@whittieralaska.gov>; Dave Dickason <mayor@whittieralaska.gov>; Cathy McCord <councilseate@whittieralaska.gov>; David Pinquoch <councilseate@whittieralaska.gov>; Peter Denmark <councilseate@whittieralaska.gov>; Dan Blair <councilseate@whittieralaska.gov>; Lazy Otter Charters <info@lazyottercharters.com>; Alaska Sea Kayakers <info@alaskaseakayakers.com>; Lydon, Tim -FS <timothy.lydon1@usda.gov>; Victoria Vandersommen <tori459@aol.com>  
**Subject:** Comments from Discovery Voyages on Huna Totem's proposed development at head of the bay

Dear Whittier City Council,

We, Captain Dean Rand and Captain Megan Ciana, are the long-time owners and operators of Alaska's original "Small Ship Cruise", Discovery Voyages (established 1982), which is based in Whittier and has been operating tours to / from, for the past 30 years.

Captain Rand is a respected ship captain and shipwright with over 45 years experience in commercial fishing, tow boating, scientific research cruises, and tourism on the North Pacific ocean and Prince William Sound. Captain Megan Ciana is also a US Coast Licensed vessel Master, a licensed medical professional, an accomplished chef and cookbook author. Our mom-and-pop seasonal small business has developed into grossing \$1,000,000.00 per year with in excess of 200K per year going to local, state and federal tax revenues.

It should also be noted that although our business model produces a high dollar annual revenue, it has a relatively small "footprint" in that we bring less than 250 guests total per year to Whittier, in small groups of only up to 12 at one time, once or twice each week. This "small group - high dollar" tourism approach eliminates any stress or cost to existing public and private infrastructure, in addition to minimizing any impacts to other users' wilderness experience. Most people don't even know that our business exists or that it has been operating for so many years.

Also, it is important to understand that we operate a wilderness dependent tour business. Our business model was designed around and is dependent on Chugach National Forests' 2.2 million acre Nellie Juan / College Fiord Wilderness Study Area, which covers most of the western and northern Prince William Sound. Our little port town of Whittier is the "gateway community" to this wilderness area.

Additionally, both of Captain Rand's two daughters, Heather and Hannah (who incidentally was born in the Whittier train tunnel in 1992!), attended Whittier school K - 12 during the 1990's and early 2000's where they received an excellent public education, which fully

prepared them for higher educational pursuits and successful adult and family lives.

During this same time frame, with the participation of Captain Rand, the Whittier School and Chugach School District received recognition for educational excellence in the form of: *The New American High School Award*, large financial grants from *The Gates Foundation* so as to bring the highly successful Chugach Educational Model to other schools, and the prestigious *Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award* (currently on display in The Alaska Native Heritage Center), which was presented to the School District by then US President GW Bush. Our own Whittier high school student at that time, Nate Moore, traveled to Washington DC, met with the President, gave an acceptance speech and accepted the award for our school district.

Also, in addition to his daily involvement in the school's educational programs, including utilizing community and regional planning subjects as hands-on civic courses for the local Chugach School District students, Captain Rand also was involved in many previous development proposals presented to the Community of Whittier by large outside corporate interests.

This list of mega proposals coming to Whittier over the past 30 years is long. To understand the "good and the bad" of each plan presented to the community of Whittier would take volumes of documents. However, history shows us that these proposals all had a common theme. Every plan presentation sounded and looked great, up until we learned more about each plan.

Today, Whittier's future, our citizens' future, local established businesses' future, and the region's unique rich wilderness character's future is "on the rocks". This proposal to develop the head of the bay for industrial tourism, coincidentally (or not?) on land only recently transferred to the City, to create as what could only be described as an "Alaska's Disneyland" complete with fake Alaskan everything, including millions more people coming here under the control of the most powerful foreign operated industrial tourism operation in the world, the mega cruise lines, is a fast - tracked bad idea on steroids.

History shows us that the cruise lines will use every free enterprise method in the book to control where and how much their passengers spend. There will be no Whittier head tax generated from any cruise ship passengers as the City Council eliminated that tax levy some 20 years ago after the cruise lines representative, Tom Dow, claimed that their passengers would spend all sorts of money at all of Whittiers' businesses. History shows us that no cruise ship passengers spend any time and money in Whittier. They are loaded onto cruise line contracted buses or trains and taken to cruise line contracted hotels in Anchorage or Denali.

This latest plan may also involve a huge growth of large high speed day tour boats transiting the entire Sound in addition to more and more sport fishing businesses all competing to catch less and less fish, along with the introduction of helicopter tours into the last of the wild places in the wilderness area. That wilderness which people have come to see and experience will no longer exist under this plan. With the addition of more and more people to the area, parking for all of us long time local businesses will be non-existent. The one lane tunnel will certainly become so clogged with traffic that "we the people" will find that large sums of our tax dollars will be needed to expand the tunnels' capacity.

The introduction of what will certainly be 100's of thousands and even millions more people

into this richly wild, peaceful, untrammelled wilderness area, will not only negatively affect the wilderness character of the entire region, but also negatively affect the wilderness dependent business models that many of us have already developed and others certainly will. We all market and sell wilderness dependent experiences whether day boat sightseeing, kayaking, camping, hiking, hunting or sport charter fishing. There will be no wilderness with millions more people coming to the area.

The Whittier City Council must recognize that Whittier is not just another Alaskan port but the gateway community to one of the world's richest, readily accessible, and well protected coastal wilderness areas. This wild, rich, and scenic resource is the region's "cash cow". Independent travelers from all over the world come here because of this fact. They spend huge amounts of money here with our locally owned enterprises, not in cruise ship owned or contracted franchises.

Many of you will recall that the cruise ships have not operated into and out of Whittier now for the past two years due to the COVID pandemic travel restrictions. However, you may also recall that during this same time, Whittier's restaurants have been packed with customers as were all of the day tour boats and sport fishing charter boats during this same period. Parking availability around town was nearly non-existent for most weeks. Lines to use the tunnel were astounding. It should be obvious that all of this commerce, which includes tax revenue for local governments to operate, was generated by independent travelers.

Let Seward have industrial tourism's fake Alaska Disneyland. Keep Whittier for the independent discriminant travelers looking for a genuine Alaskan vacation experience and who have the money to pay for it.

Whittier, as the gateway community to this valuable wild and scenic coast, can help to maintain the wild character of our "cash cow" for generations to come through wise, visionary, long term planning.

Thank you for your consideration of this important public issue.

Captain Dean Rand  
Captain Megan Ciana

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A proud partner in "A Wild Promise", highlighting the value of the Nellie Juan-College Fjord Wilderness Study Area. For more information, visit the publisher at: <https://www.braidedriver.org/wild-promise/>

Captain Dean Rand: 907.529.1123  
Captain Megan Ciana/ Office: 907.202.1017





To: The Huna Totem Development Group and The City of Whittier  
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